

Topic 6

The IEP Meeting

This topic covers preparation of the family for the Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting. It is critical that the parent is well-prepared to advocate for their child at this meeting as the services to be provided, the type of setting in which those services will be provided, and the annual goals will all be determined at the IEP meeting.

Materials

- Parent Information Manual developed by Support & Training for Exceptional Parents, Inc. at <http://www.tnstep.org/Assets/docs/ParentManual12009.pdf>
- “Transition Items/Materials to Bring to the IEP Meeting” (see *Steps to Success*, page 9)
- Special Education Definitions (See *Steps to Success*, page 10)
- Website for “IDEA Notice of Procedural Safeguards”
www.state.tn.gov/education/speced/

“A. What is an Individualized Education Plan?”

The IEP meeting is scheduled just before or by the child’s third birthday. The purpose of the IEP meeting is to develop the individualized education program for the child. The IEP is a written plan for a child with a disability that is developed and implemented according to federal and state regulations. IEP meetings can be held as frequently as needed, but at least annually. The meeting can result from a parent request (in writing) or a written notice from the school. This plan includes:

- A description of the child’s strengths and needs (present levels of performance)
- A statement of measurable annual goals and instructional objectives related to meeting the child’s needs
- A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child.
- A statement of how the child will be educated and participate with other children with and without disabilities.
- A statement of how the child will be involved and progress in the extracurricular and other non-academic activities in the general curriculum
- The explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in school activities;
- A statement of any individual modifications the child may need to participate in state mandated assessments.
- If the IEP team determines that the child will not participate in a particular assessment, the IEP must include a statement of why the assessment is not appropriate and how the child will be assessed;
- The projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications described in the IEP and the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those services and modifications;
- Transition services showing how planned studies (course of study) are related to the student’s goals beyond secondary education and the student’s goals beyond secondary education

- A statement of how the child's progress will be measured and the parent will be regularly informed.

B. Who should attend the IEP meeting?

The school district is required to invite the following people to attend the IEP meeting as valued members of the decision-making process:

- Parents;
- The child, when appropriate;
- At least one of the child's general education teachers;
- At least one special education teacher, or where appropriate, at least one of the child's special education providers (such as an OT or SLP)
- A representative of the school district who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction for children with disabilities. The district representative should also be knowledgeable about the general curriculum and about the availability of resources of the school district;
- A person who can explain the instructional implications of the evaluation results; and/or at the discretion of the parents or school district other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child.

Note: the IEP meeting should be held at a mutually agreed upon time and place.

The school district must document all attempts to contact the parent. **If parents choose not to attend, an IEP meeting may be conducted without them. The results of the meeting must be provided to the parents.**

For children transitioning from Tennessee's Early Intervention System (TEIS), having a representative from TEIS who is knowledgeable of the child's current assessment results, needs, and the services that have been provided, is strongly encouraged.

C. What is the responsibility of the IEP team?

The responsibility of the IEP team is to:

- Inform parents of their rights verbally and/or in writing.
- Review the results of the evaluation, and/or the current IEP if the meeting is an annual review.
- Identify areas of strengths and needs;
- Identify measurable goals, objectives and benchmarks.
- Identify the special education and related services needed to implement the IEP.
- Determine Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).
- Review additional considerations.

D. What additional considerations could the IEP team review?

- The child's need for extended school year services, if appropriate;
- The need for Braille instruction if the child has a visual impairment;
- His or her language needs as they relate to the IEP if he needs alternate communication methods to be used or if the child has Limited English Proficiency
- The child's need for assistive technology devices and services.

- If the child's behavior impedes his/her learning or that of others, consider strategies, including positive behavior interventions and supports to address that behavior.
- Transportation needs.

E. When will the IEP be reviewed and/or revised?

- The IEP may be reviewed and/or revised at any time during the school year at the request of the parent or the school district.
- The IEP must be reviewed at least annually to determine whether the annual goals for the child are being achieved."

A properly written, maintained and carried out IEP is the parent's assurance of quality and appropriate services. The IEP is the most important document dealing with the education of the child.

Parents can request another IEP meeting if not satisfied with results. The IEP document is not set in stone!

Remember, initial services for a child through the LEA cannot begin until the IEP is signed. The important outcome of this meeting is to begin services through the LEA. That is why signing the IEP at this first meeting is so important.

F. What if the parents are dissatisfied with the IEP process?

Conflicts about the child's IEP can usually be solved on a local level by meeting with school personnel to work out differences.

Step One: Contact the teacher or principal at the child's school

Step Two: Hold an IEP team meeting to discuss concerns of the IEP team members.

Step Three: If "Step Two" is unsuccessful, contact the special education office at the local board of education.

Step Four: If "Step Three" does not resolve the matter, contact the Office of Legal Services, Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Education. Phone (615) 741-0660. Fax (615) 253-5567 for information about:

1. Administrative Complaint
2. Mediation
3. Due Process Hearing

Note: See www.state.tn.gov/government/speced/ for a complete description of these methods to resolve complaints.

Sample Activities for the Early Interventionist and Family:

1. Review glossary of Special Education Definitions in the *Steps to Success* booklet, page 10, with the family.
2. Identify additional resources to help families understand the IEP process (*Steps to Success* booklet, STEP Parent Manual).
3. Lead family in a discussion that identifies their child's strengths and needs.
4. Review "Transition Items/Materials to Bring to the IEP Meeting" (page 9, *Steps to Success* booklet) with the family.

Family Follow-Up:

1. The parent/guardian should familiarize himself with Special Education processes and laws by reading materials at the public library, searching the internet on this topic, or attending a STEP Workshop (see materials section).
2. Update the child's list of medications. Remember to include correct spelling of medication, dosage and times medicine is to be given.
3. Request from the LEA an interpreter and materials in a language other than English, if necessary, for this meeting.
4. Update and make copies of the child profile booklet, "I'm Getting Ready for Preschool" (see page 4-3), to give to teachers, therapists etc.
5. Make sure to gather requested materials to take to the IEP meeting.

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